

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 30, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
House Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

We are writing to ask for your timely leadership in providing additional emergency funding to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) for FY24 in the next possible legislative vehicle to ensure any appropriations package fully funds the program. As you know, WIC is one of our most effective and important programs, providing critical nutrition assistance and services to nearly 7 million low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children. Yet the WIC program is facing a dire and highly unusual threat. As a result of increased program participation and the rising cost of food prices, annual funding bills proposed in both the House and Senate fail to provide sufficient funding to serve WIC's projected number of participants and provide them with the full benefit. The most recent public request from the Administration reflects that fully funding the WIC program for FY24 would require \$1.4 billion over FY23 levels.

According to a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of both funding bills, roughly [600,000 eligible low-income postpartum women and young children](#) would be turned away from the program, potentially jeopardizing their health. In addition, the House bill proposes slashing WIC benefits to 4.7 million pregnant and postpartum women, toddlers, and preschoolers. A disproportionate share of those who are at risk of losing access to WIC or having their benefits cut are Black and Hispanic.

WIC provides critical nutrition benefits, breastfeeding support, and other vital services to low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children under five years of age who are at nutritional risk. In recognition of WIC's positive impacts on health and developmental outcomes, for more than 25 years policymakers have adhered to a bipartisan commitment to provide the program with sufficient funding to serve all eligible families who seek to participate. During this period, benefits have not been cut and states have not had to turn away new applicants or participants who reach the end of their certification period and need to renew their benefits. This

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will no longer be the case if additional funding is not provided to fully protect participation and benefits in FY24.

The consequences of not fully funding WIC in the upcoming appropriations bill would be catastrophic. If lower funding levels require states to reduce WIC participation, program rules would result in preschoolers and postpartum women who are not breastfeeding being turned away first. That means that when a woman who is participating in WIC while pregnant gives birth and thus needs to renew her WIC benefits, her baby could continue to receive infant formula, but her benefits might be discontinued. The effect of this cut will fall disproportionately on Black and Hispanic families.

Additionally, because breastfeeding rates are lower for Black women, waiting lists for postpartum women who aren't breastfeeding would fall disproportionately on Black mothers - who are already at higher risk for severe pregnancy-related health issues. All told, Black women represent 21 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women participating in WIC, but 28 percent of postpartum women who are not breastfeeding.

There are currently more than 1.5 million Hispanic children and 750,000 Black children aged one through four who participate in WIC. Without additional funding, these children, especially the 350,000 Hispanic and the 160,000 Black three-year-olds, could be turned away when they turn four and have to recertify.

We urge you to act in the best interests of low-income women and children across the country who need the critical and very effective assistance WIC provides. The program needs to be fully funded in the final appropriations legislation for FY24. It is imperative to increase WIC funding to meet the anticipated FY24 need as soon as possible on an emergency basis and make sure it is fully funded in the final appropriations bill for fiscal year 2024.

Sincerely,



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Rep. Nanette Barragán  
Chair  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



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Rep. Steven Horsford  
Chair  
Congressional Black Caucus



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Rep. Lois Frankel  
Chair  
Democratic Women's Caucus

CC: The Honorable, Patty Murray, Chairwoman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Susan Collins, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable, Kay Granger, Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations